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July 14, 2021

Dear Members,

As you are all aware, the Minister of Health (MOH) made a major announcement today directing BCEHS to focus on two specific goals:

- Provide timely and exceptional service to British Columbians when and where they need ambulance services
- Be an outstanding employer in supporting the wellness of call taker, dispatch, and paramedic staff

In support of those two goals, the MOH announced the following:

- The appointment of a new chair and reconstituted board of BCEHS that is focused solely on ambulance services and its staff accountable directly to the Minister of Health.
- The appointment of a new senior executive VP as the Chief Ambulance Officer reporting to the BCEHS board and a member of the senior executive team of PHSA. The Chief Ambulance Officer will be solely focused on providing senior executive leadership for the BC Ambulance Service and the achievement of the two goals working collaboratively with the BC Ambulance senior management team, ambulance paramedics, and the ambulance union leadership.
- A series of immediate actions to strengthen ambulance operations focused on increasing the capacity of dispatch and paramedics to respond quickly to urgent patient calls:
  - The Ministry of Health will make available budget resources and direct BCEHS to hire an additional 30 full-time dispatchers.
  - The Ministry of Health will make available budget resources and direct BCEHS to hire 85 full-time paramedics for Metro/Large Urban regions beyond hiring already planned for 2020/21 focused on reducing wait times for purple and red events.
  - The Ministry of Health will direct BCEHS to bring forward an assessment, recommendations, and an action plan to the Minister by the end of September on the conversion of up to 22 pre-hospital SOC stations to 24/7 ALPHA stations to enhance ambulance coverage for these communities. The plan will set out timelines and prioritization for the conversion starting with six communities October 1<sup>st</sup> and with completion of all recommended conversions by June 30, 2022.
  - The Ministry of Health will direct health authorities to provide additional and appropriate staff available to receive and care for patients before they can be formally admitted to the Emergency Department, to reduce hand-over times for paramedics and get paramedics and ambulances back on the road to respond to patient calls.

- The Ministry of Health will provide funding and direct BCEHS to purchase an additional 22 ambulances for the Metro Vancouver/Fraser regions.
- The Ministry of Health will work with BCEHS and the Union leadership to take immediate action to better support employee wellness. The Ministry of Health will provide funding to contract a team of mental health and wellness professionals to work directly with dispatch staff and paramedics to address chronic stress, fatigue and to support wellness among staff (including access to trauma informed therapy).

This announcement comes on the heels of one of the most devastating weeks in the history of our ambulance service following the deaths of over 700 British Columbians during a historic heat dome from June 25<sup>th</sup> to July 1<sup>st</sup>. The effects of the heat dome emphasized the significant and systemic issues plaguing our service, and as we have already reported in detail (see [July 7<sup>th</sup> Member Update](#)), we have been working very closely with the MOH, the CEO of PHSA and other integral stakeholders to develop and implement solutions. On July 5<sup>th</sup>, APBC shared a comprehensive briefing document outlining 51 solutions, containing both immediate and long-term solutions to address critical areas within BC Emergency Health Services. The document was shared with the Minister of Health on July 7<sup>th</sup>, and the entire APBC membership on July 13<sup>th</sup> (see memo [here](#)).

We are excited today, to see some of those solutions expeditiously implemented by the MOH and are pleased to have his commitment to continue to work collaboratively to bring about positive change for our members and those we serve. We recognize today's announcement as positive and the start of change and reform within our ambulance service. When change and reform are long overdue, it is challenging to appreciate the pace progress can take. There is still a significant amount of work ahead of us and we will continue to use our solutions based briefing document to guide and support our efforts. The recognition by the MOH and the government of the significant challenges our ambulance service is facing provides a sense of relief as acknowledging there is a problem is an imperative first step in the development of solutions.

The introduction of a Chief Ambulance Officer and the reconstitution of the board of BCEHS will hopefully provide our ambulance service stakeholders a renewed perspective that more accurately recognizes and represents the unique qualities and needs of our profession. We have already reached out to Leanne Heppell and Jim Chu to meet as soon as possible and begin work and maintain the momentum generated today.

We are also pleased to have the acknowledgement of the MOH on the toll our work can take on member's mental health and well-being and for the funding committed to address these issues. Our APBC Health and Wellness Director, Bob Parkinson, and Mental Health and Wellness Coordinator, Warren Leeder, are



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prepared to begin collaborative work with BCEHS, relevant stakeholders and professionals immediately to better support our members' needs.

With respect to the announcement surrounding the role of our first responder partners, the provincial regulator (EMALB) is being tasked to review and make recommendations back to the ministry by September. APBC will be seeking involvement in that review and with our extensive experience in other Canadian Paramedic jurisdictions, and here in BC, we are confident that evidenced based, best practices will be incorporated into those recommendations.

We anticipate more details to come forth in the days and weeks to come regarding today's announcement and we remain committed to communicating those details to the membership as quickly as possible.

Sincerely,

The Provincial Executive Committee  
Ambulance Paramedics of BC  
CUPE Local 873

JC/km/MoveUp

